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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT LOUIS 000598

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/06/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [VE](#) [GT](#) [MP](#)
SUBJECT: MAURITIAN PRIME MINISTER ON BILATERAL RELATIONS,
ANTI-TERRORISM COOPERATION, VENEZUELA, AND CUBA

REF: A. PORT LOUIS 595
[1](#)B. PORT LOUIS 587

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Stephen Schwartz.
Reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Mauritian Prime Minister told Charge October 6 that he has no particular problem with U.S. foreign policy, despite comments to the contrary broadcast on Mauritian radio. Ramgoolam emphasized that he has tried hard to maintain consistent principles in foreign affairs and denounced any other government which has advanced double standards. Charge urged Ramgoolam to uphold Mauritius' support for Guatemala's bid for the UNSC, despite the PM's recent meeting with Venezuelan President Chavez. Charge also asked for Mauritian support for international efforts to prevent North Korea from testing a nuclear weapon. Ramgoolam expressed a personal interest in developing greater bilateral anti-terrorism cooperation. Charge noted that the new U.S. Ambassador to Mauritius would arrive on October 20, Ramgoolam said he is ready to announce his choice as Mauritius' Ambassador to the United States. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) In an effort to address and defuse U.S. concerns about a critical statement he had made on U.S. foreign policy (excerpt at para 8), Mauritian Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam opened a meeting with Charge d'Affaires a.i. October 6 by announcing tongue in cheek that he had a "new friend, President Chavez." Ramgoolam said that in their bilat on the margins of the UN General Assembly, Chavez offered him oil in exchange for Mauritian support for Venezuela's UN Security Council bid. (Ref B) Ramgoolam said he found Chavez smart and very engaging but that Chavez's remarks about President Bush were wrong. Charge took the opportunity to note the interview Ramgoolam gave to a Mauritian media outlet September 22 and ask Ramgoolam whether he shared Chavez's cynicism about the U.S. If so, Charge offered to help clarify or resolve any divergence in an otherwise strong bilateral relationship.

[1](#)3. (C) Ramgoolam said he has no particular problem with U.S. foreign policy but opposes double standards in everyone's foreign policies. He spent much of the 45 minute meeting citing examples of how he'd been consistent while others were inconsistent. He recounted how he had denounced Nigeria, Burma, and Fiji at the UN in the mid-1990s and how he'd differed with UK Prime Minister Tony Blair when the latter pleaded in the Commonwealth for Pakistan not to be expelled after its last coup d'etat as an exception to Commonwealth rules. Ramgoolam said that he thought the U.S. invasion of Iraq had increased the global threat from terrorism and questioned why some countries won't deal with Hamas even

though it was elected democratically. Charge explained that the USG applauded the conduct of the Palestinian elections but, along with the EU, Russia, and UN, would not deal directly with Hamas until it recognizes Israel's right to exist, renounces terrorism, and accepts prior agreements of the Palestinian Authority including the Road Map.

¶4. (C) Charge informed Ramgoolam that Ambassador Cesar Cabrera would be arriving in Mauritius on October 20 and was tentatively scheduled to present credentials on October 26. The Embassy had requested a call on the PM for later that day. Ramgoolam said he looked forward to meeting Ambassador Cabrera and said he would announce his choice for Ambassador to the U.S. as soon as ForMin Dulloo returned to Mauritius. Charge also noted two good meetings held recently between USG officials and Secretary for Home Affairs Raj Mudhoo which would likely lead to greater cooperation in the Global War on Terror. Ramgoolam said he was pleased by this development on an issue of great concern to him. He offered to meet USG officials on this matter in the near future. Charge noted that Mauritius and the U.S. had signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement recently that that this was a very positive development. Charge encouraged Ramgoolam to uphold Mauritius' pledge of support for Guatemala's bid for a seat on the UN Security Council, despite his newfound friendship with President Chavez (Ref A).

¶5. (C) ForMin Dulloo and Foreign Secretary Neewoor had recently told Charge that Ramgoolam's frustration with the USG probably stemmed from the unwillingness of the U.S. Congress to grant Mauritius access to the Third Country Fabric provision of the African Growth and Opportunity Act. Charge raised the issue with Ramgoolam, questioning the

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economic benefit of such access since most of the large producers had already acquired their own or had access to local spinning capacity and thus no longer needed to use Third Country Fabric. Ramgoolam, echoing Dulloo, said the biggest benefit of the benefit would be psychological and political since Mauritius feels itself under siege economically with the loss of key trade preferences on sugar and textiles.

¶6. (C) Ramgoolam, who smoked a cigar throughout the meeting, shared an experience in Cuba that revealed the country's pervasive and rigid Communist mindset. Upon arrival in Cuba for the Non-Aligned Movement summit in September, Cuban officials were under strict instructions to make heads of government and state wait at the airport until a parade in their honor could be arranged to properly welcome them to the country. Ramgoolam said that after cooling his heels for an hour he told his minder that he was going to the hotel. The minder insisted he wait since "President Castro had given the order." Ramgoolam left anyway. He said Madagascar's President Ravalomanana also left, while leaders from Lesotho and Mozambique waited up to four hours for their parades.

¶7. (C) Charge shared with Ramgoolam USG concerns about North Korea's threat to test a nuclear weapon, noting that we would not accept a nuclear North Korea and were fully engaged in diplomatic efforts to prevent such a development. The U.S. sought Mauritian support for a Presidential Statement on the issue and for any global effort to persuade North Korea to dissuade North Korea from conducting a nuclear test.

¶8. (U) Begin text of question and answer.

¶Q. You have had the opportunity to meet Hugo Chavez (President of Venezuela) in Cuba. On the United Nations platform on Wednesday, he called George W. Bush a devil,. What is your reaction?

¶A. Hugo Chavez, whom I met for the first time in Cuba, is a very popular person in his country. He has extraordinary charisma and a will to fight poverty. We got on very well.

In fact, our tete-a-tete lasted an hour. The United Nations constitutes a platform where freedom of expression is important. I think that we have to try to understand why President Chavez has made such remarks. However, it is not the ideal platform to make personal attacks. We are all supposed to use the same language, international law. But note what happened in Diego Garcia and the Middle East. We say that we want to promote democracy. Let,s take a look at U.S. policy. To promote democracy in Iraq the Americans have invaded the country. When the Hamas party has been democratically elected in Palestine, it has not been recognized. It is this double language, this double standard, which forces people to become cynical and to make attacks.

End text of question and answer.

¶9. (C) Comment: Ramgoolam bent over backwards to defuse any potential problem with the USG over his comments to the press. Throughout the 45 minute meeting he repeatedly returned to this theme of how consistent he has been and how he has challenged others. The meeting covered a lot of ground and served to remind Ramgoolam that we are paying attention and that we care about the bilateral relationship. He got the message and let us know in his own way that he too cares about the relationship. End comment.

¶10. (U) Ramgoolam's Chief of Staff Kailash Ruhee and Poloff served as notetakers.
Schwartz